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Chairman: Mr. JALLOW (Gambia)
(Vice-Chairman)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued)

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS (continued)

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued)

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In the absence of Mr. Krenkel (Austria), Mr. Jallow (Gambia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/47/131, 178, 280, 296, A/47/351-S/24357, A/47/364, 365, 391, 564, 569 and A/47/638-S/24772)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued) (A/47/12 and Add.1)

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS (continued) (A/47/91-S/23585, A/47/529 and Corr.1)

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/47/352, A/47/420-S/24519, A/47/455-S/24571 and A/47/540)

1. Mr. CUEVA (Honduras), speaking on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, said that the Second Meeting of the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) had been held in April 1992 in San Salvador and had addressed important subjects such as the strengthening of peace, national reconciliation and democracy for the Central American region. In that context, consideration had been given to the urgent need to solve problems by creating economic and social conditions promoting the reintegration of the refugees and displaced persons directly affected by the armed conflicts of the previous decade. The different topics discussed included access to land and credit, availability of basic services such as health, education and drinking water, and obtaining land and employment. In addition, the Meeting had reaffirmed the importance of strengthening the mechanisms for implementing the CIREFCA Plan of Action, setting up a data bank and continuing to evaluate projects and their financing.

2. The countries of the region had met on 12 May in Managua in order to reaffirm the validity of the Plan of Action and the intention to participate in joint coordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in order to make it more dynamic. The participants in the Meeting had reiterated the view that the High Commissioner should continue to direct that work in order to bring about the complete reintegration of the returnees. They had stressed that UNDP should formulate more specific programmes and coordinate more effectively its activities with other agencies and that the non-governmental organizations should maintain complementary programmes that supported the valiant efforts by the CIREFCA participating Governments. The cooperating parties should provide their pledged contributions since those funds would make it possible to ensure rehabilitation and consolidate peace.

(Mr. Cueva, Honduras)

3. On 29 September 1992, a joint UNHCR/UNDP working group had met with the Follow-up Committee in order to analyse the results of the Managua meeting. Among the main conclusions, it had been pointed out that some cooperating countries were losing interest in the region and that only a group of countries was willing to carry out the commitments undertaken. Surprise had been caused by the criticisms expressed by some cooperating countries that had regarded as technically lacking the execution of projects which, nevertheless, had been formulated with the technical support and ongoing supervision of UNHCR and UNDP. A request had been made to increase contributions, simplify communication and delivery mechanisms and ensure that they were more efficient and effective.

4. In order to improve that situation, UNHCR and UNDP should give stronger support to the Governments of the region in order to obtain more speedily the contributions offered by the cooperating countries. It was possible that when the refugee problems were transferred from UNHCR to UNDP in the middle of 1993, some of the gains achieved in helping refugees, displaced persons and returnees would be lost.

5. In creating the necessary conditions for ensuring the voluntary repatriation of thousands of refugees and carrying out the process of reconstruction, readaptation and reintegration into productive life, it was important to support and strengthen the agricultural, industrial and commercial activities for refugees and their communities. The Project for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees in Central America, which was coordinated and executed by UNDP with the participation of other United Nations agencies, had favoured the execution of projects for population groups affected by mass displacement, conflict and extreme poverty in 15 different areas agreed upon with the Governments of six countries. Assistance had been provided for the community infrastructure, agriculture, health, education and promotion of human rights.

6. Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia) said that, of the 18 million current refugees, approximately 12 per cent had been accepted by the countries of Europe and North America. The great number of asylum-seekers and the lack of resources were the two biggest obstacles to solving the refugee problem. The largest proportion was due to so-called economic migration, especially in Africa. The refugee problem, or to be more exact, the problem of migration, was caused not only by political persecution, but also by lack of food. The international community should, therefore, deal with the issue of the responsibility of States for creating conditions leading to refugee flows and should draw up rules in that regard.

7. Czechoslovakia was a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol and was one of the States cooperating with the United Nations and UNHCR to bring about a solution to the problem. His country had had its first experience in that respect in 1989 with the first

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

flow of refugees from Eastern Europe. More than 5,000 people had requested refugee status under the Geneva Convention, of which 25 per cent had been granted such status.

8. Czechoslovakia supported all the steps taken by the High Commissioner to eliminate the causes of the refugee problem and create conditions for the return of the refugees to their homes. Closer cooperation between UNHCR and his country had also been brought about through the opening of the Office of the regional UNHCR representative in Prague at the beginning of 1992.

9. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's initiative aimed at strengthening system-wide coordination through the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Assistance. Such assistance should be based on the principle of international solidarity with the nations affected and the States that assumed the responsibility to receive refugees.

10. The United Nations should play a more active role in future monitoring situations that might lead to mass flows of refugees, adopt measures to prevent them and coordinate international assistance in areas where it was needed. His delegation supported the idea of establishing an international information, monitoring and early-warning system as well as preventive measures aimed at ensuring political stability, implementing human rights, solving the problems of ethnic minorities and alleviating the economic problems of the country in question. He also supported reforming legislation on refugees.

11. The Office's educational programmes, which facilitated the integration of refugees into the economies of the receiving States and, after repatriation, of the States of origin were important. In order to prevent abuse of the right to asylum for the purpose of economic migration, it was necessary to improve the exchange of information to uncover passport and visa fraud. Czechoslovakia had taken measures in cooperation with other European States to prevent abuse of asylum policies by economic migrants.

12. His delegation favoured a political solution to the refugee problem in different parts of the world, in particular the former Yugoslavia, in order to eliminate the current refugee flows and create conditions enabling them to return to their homes. Czechoslovakia was striving to participate actively in efforts to mitigate the sufferings of the victims of that civil war and was ready to assign its specialists to the UNHCR group of experts to provide assistance to those refugees.

13. His country did not support setting binding quotas for receiving refugees. Nevertheless, it agreed that humanitarian assistance would be provided in the most efficient way, if the refugees stayed in safe zones as close to their homes as possible. Establishing safe zones under the control of the United Nations should not, however, lead to the forced displacement of

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

"undesired" groups from certain territories. Czechoslovakia recognized the status of temporary refugees by providing the same assistance to persons fleeing from the former Yugoslavia as to applicants for refugee status, without using standard asylum procedures.

14. His country had contributed $25,000 to the UNHCR budget to solve the problem of the receiving States and had given material assistance to Hungary in the amount of $75,000. His country's aim was to take part in the development of international cooperation to mitigate the hardships of persons who had become refugees through no fault of their own.

15. Mr. STEFANOV (Bulgaria) said that, undoubtedly, the problem of refugees and migrants went beyond the boundaries of individual States, making joint international efforts and effective cooperation indispensable. The implementation of an overall policy involving measures to promote development, education and other social programmes should encourage potential refugees or migrants to remain in their countries. The objective of the Organization's prevention activities was to eliminate or reduce the factors compelling refugee flows.

16. Bulgaria agreed that, in addition to seeking durable solutions in economic and social development and strengthening international and regional security, an emergency preparedness and response mechanism should be included in order to deal effectively with every situation. It shared the view that resolution 46/182 provided a framework for an appropriate United Nations response to complex humanitarian emergency situations.

17. The emergence of new refugee situations underlined the importance of devising new approaches and tools for their protection. In reality, not all individuals participating in mass migrations met the requirements established under the Geneva Convention of 1951. Bulgaria welcomed the establishment by the Executive Committee of a Working Group on Solutions and Protection and commended its efforts to define specific categories of persons requesting asylum and refuge. The recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group constituted an appropriate basis for finding durable solutions to the problem of definitions.

18. Emphasis must be placed on the importance of productive coordination and an active working relationship between UNHCR and other relevant United Nations bodies such as the Human Rights Committee, the Committee against Torture, the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. UNHCR provided valuable assistance and advice to States on refugee legislation, procedures for determining the legal status of refugees and the creation of institutional infrastructure.

(Mr. Stefanov, Bulgaria)

19. Regarding the conflict in Yugoslavia, he said that the selfless efforts of UNHCR staff on behalf of the refugees and displaced persons in that country in preparation for winter must be recognized. Unfortunately, those efforts were being undermined by the continuing policy of "ethnic cleansing". Ethnic conflicts in Macedonia indicated that the potential for violent confrontation had not yet been exhausted. The international community should redouble its efforts and take decisive measures to prevent a dangerous expansion of the conflict.

20. Bulgaria fully supported UNHCR objectives in the former Yugoslavia, namely, to prevent further displacement and to facilitate the return of displaced persons to their homes. Some non-governmental organizations, among them the Bulgarian Red Cross, were providing assistance to refugees in Bulgaria.

21. Early in 1992, the Bulgarian Parliament had passed a law ratifying the Convention of 1951 relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol of 1967. The forthcoming enactment of a decision under study by the Legislative Assembly regarding a declaration in accordance with article 1, section B (1) of that Convention would conclude the constitutional procedures for its ratification.

22. On 23 October 1992, the Government of Bulgaria had established a National Office for Asylum and Refugees for the purpose of providing legal and administrative protection to individuals seeking asylum, ensuring concerted action for the adoption of measures designed to implement the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the Protocol of 1967, cooperating with the High Commissioner and assisting her in the fulfilment of her duties, as provided by international agreements. In addition, an agreement would be signed between the Government of Bulgaria and the High Commissioner for Refugees. A UNHCR Liaison Office had been in operation in Sofia for two months. UNHCR activities held in Bulgaria included an October 1991 seminar on refugee law and a March 1992 seminar on emergency management. Those seminars had considered such matters as protection against deportation and expulsion, personal safety of refugees and related emergency measures. His delegation wished to affirm its full support to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the pursuit of its lofty goals.

23. Ms. SYAHRUDDIN (Indonesia) said that the refugee situation had not improved and the world-wide refugee population had reached more than 17 million. Although the transformation of international relations had contributed to the settlement of some refugee situations through voluntary repatriation, regional conflicts had prompted new flows. Progress was being made in some regions, such as Central America and South-East Asia. Events in the Horn of Africa continued to cause internal displacement of population, and Europe had been faced with refugee problems and their socio-economic impact on host countries. "Ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia and Herzegovina had threatened an entire people with extermination; their only hope for survival was to seek asylum in neighbouring States.

(Ms. Syahruddin, Indonesia)

24. Furthermore, the developing countries continued to bear the larger portion of the world's refugee burden. Despite their own problems of structural adjustment, negative terms of trade, flight of capital and debt servicing, they were continuing to fulfil their humanitarian obligations, welcoming 70 per cent of the world's refugees and displaced persons.

25. The international community must focus on providing assistance to developing countries, with particular emphasis on Africa. The Tenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had commended the United Nations and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for the assistance provided to Somalia and neighbouring countries hosting Somali refugees. It had also addressed various political and economic issues that, if resolved, could facilitate the repatriation of refugees and resettlement of displaced persons.

26. Her delegation welcomed the unprecedented response of the international community to the activities of UNHCR, as noted in paragraph 31 of document A/47/12, and took note of the initiatives undertaken to enhance emergency response capacity. Greater cooperation among agencies could help to support such activities, particularly those that were development-oriented.

27. Indonesia had long participated in efforts to bring peace and stability to South-East Asia, particularly through implementation of the Paris Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, which would help end the sufferings of the Cambodian people, and the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees. The Programme of Orderly Departures was the best method to prevent illegal departures and to address the issue of individuals seeking asylum and remaining in refugee camps for extended periods.

28. Mr. ZABIGAILO (Ukraine) said that the fall of the last empire, the emergence of new independent and sovereign States in Europe and Asia and the end of the cold war had created new possibilities and hopes for economies and for the fulfilment of human aspirations. Ukraine was among the most convincing examples of that change. After declaring independence in August 1991, the new State had made progress in building a democratic political system and in becoming integrated in the international community. However, its economy had not progressed to the same extent.

29. It was important that the transition from a totalitarian system to a political democracy should take place in a climate of stability. In the former Yugoslavia and some other States of Europe and Central Asia, the conflicts during the period of transition to a new society had provoked bloody and tragic confrontations and had endangered the lives of millions forced to flee their countries, thereby becoming an unprotected population.

(Mr. Zabigailo, Ukraine)

30. Ukraine, a founding Member of the United Nations, regarded the problem as alarming, and therefore echoed the concern expressed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in her report (A/47/12). Ukraine had first-hand experience with the refugee problem as a result of the bloody clashes that had occurred in a neighbouring country, the Republic of Moldova. Guided in its domestic and foreign policy by humanitarian principles, the United Nations Charter and other instruments of international law, Ukraine had not wavered in providing support and in fulfilling its commitments to protect refugees from armed conflict and mass repression, despite the difficulties being experienced by its own people.

31. The international community and the Committee should focus attention on the complex problem that the Ukraine had inherited from the imperial past: the deported peoples, including Tartars, Germans, Greeks and Armenians, who, during the decades from 1930 to 1950, had been forced to relocate, thus becoming refugees. They had been resettled in places far from their homelands in the Republics of the former empire. Currently, more than 500,000 of those people, including 100,000 Ukrainians, wanted to return to their countries. Ukraine opened its doors to all desiring to return. To give an idea of the enormity of the task, he pointed out that thousands of new jobs, housing units, hospitals, schools, nurseries, etc. would have to be created. Ukraine would assume its responsibilities on the basis of the principles of humanitarian law and human rights, to develop norms and legal statutes to govern its humanitarian assistance activities.

32. Following the proclamation in November 1991 of the Declaration of the Rights of Nationalities, which rejected the idea of building a State on the basis of ethnic origin, Ukraine decided to ensure the strict observance of the rights of the citizens of over 100 nationalities in its territory and to guarantee the rights of religious minorities. The policy of Ukraine was based on the principle of creating living, political, economic and social conditions of equality enabling citizens not only to move about freely but also to live in dignity. That policy was fully in line with the basic elements of the strategy developed by the High Commissioner of applying preventive measures. In that connection, Ukraine agreed that the best way of dealing with the refugee problem was to prevent refugee flows and to eliminate or reduce the factors that affected or caused such flows. Only the right of States, reconciliation and agreement based on respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and the peaceful settlement of disputes could help to achieve a lasting solution to the problem.

33. Having understood the complexity of the issue and the fact that preventive measures did not always achieve the expected results, the international community was preparing through UNHCR and other participating United Nations agencies, including the Human Rights Committee, to take part in the work of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Human Rights; other intergovernmental and non-governmental international organizations would also participate in the work.

(Mr. Zabigailo, Ukraine)

34. Ukraine was of the opinion that the 1951 Geneva Convention and 1967 Protocol were still the basic instruments for the protection of the rights of refugees. That was why it had decided to accede to the Convention and the Protocol and was in the process of finalizing the procedures for accession to those instruments.

35. Mr. BURCUOGLU (Turkey) said that the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs had filled a big gap in the United Nations system and that it was necessary to rationalize the work of the United Nations and to establish effective coordination between the efforts of the United Nations and those of Governments and the institutions and organizations concerned. In that regard, he stressed the close operational links established by the High Commissioner with other United Nations agencies.

36. Although there had been a glimmer of hope for a solution to the refugee problem in 1992, there had also been more emergency situations and the number of refugees had increased considerably. UNHCR had had to face many difficulties and the international community realized once more that massive population movements could endanger international peace and security.

37. Turkey wished to stress the results achieved by the strategy that focused attention on preparing for, preventing and resolving emergency situations, which had been enhanced by the experience acquired during 1992 as well as the recommendations contained in document A/47/12/Add.1. Turkey also agreed with the conclusions of the Executive Committee concerning refugee women and children, who were the most vulnerable groups, and appreciated the High Commissioner's efforts on their behalf. The wave of intolerance, racism and xenophobia against refugees must definitely be stemmed, greater attention must be paid to reintegration as a permanent solution and more stress must be placed on the need to share the burden to the greatest extent possible through international assistance.

38. Turkey, a country that had traditionally provided asylum to refugees starting with the Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula from 1492 onwards spared no effort to alleviate the suffering of those seeking refuge. Turkey was continuously grappling with steady inflows of people from the south-east, the north-east, Iraq or Bosnia, to mention just the four most recent waves of refugees. It was also providing humanitarian assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose sovereignty and territorial integrity were being flagrantly violated in total disregard of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Although the international community had firmly condemned the aggression of Serbia and the abhorrent practice of ethnic cleansing and had demanded an immediate halt to all violations, the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to suffer. Neither the resolutions of the Security Council nor the decisions of the London Conference had been implemented. The approaching winter made it even more urgent to provide protection and shelter for the population because hundreds of thousands of people were at risk of extinction unless an effective response was forthcoming from the international community.

(Mr. Burcuoglu, Turkey)

39. Although UNHCR obviously could not halt the Serbian aggression, it was up to the Security Council and the international community to accomplish that task. The Security Council and the international community must assume their historic responsibilities in the face of Serbian aggression and the abhorrent practice of ethnic cleansing, which constituted an act of genocide.

40. The creation of security zones for refugees from Bosnia was currently attracting particular interest and, in that connection, Turkey proposed the following: first, the demilitarization of urban areas such as Sarajevo, Tuzla, Goradjze, Bihac, Jajce and Travnik; second, the deployment of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the demilitarized zones with a view to establishing militarily protected areas for the civilian population and making it easier to deliver humanitarian assistance to those who needed it; and third, the establishment of a network of safety corridors linking those areas. He expressed the hope that those proposals would be universally supported since the credibility of the United Nations was at stake.

41. Mr. SACIRBEY (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that every day thousands of people from Bosnia and Herzegovina became victims of a deliberate policy to create refugees which constituted a crime against humanity. The refugees were not victims of an ethnic civil war but of a merciless aggressor bent on the creation of a "Greater Serbia". It was a well-known fact that the objective of the Belgrade Government and its proxies in Bosnia and Herzegovina was to create refugees through fear and terror.

42. In physical terms, the occupation forces had unleashed a policy of systematic murder of non-Serbian civilians and had brutally bombed civilian areas, cutting them off from food, water and electricity.

43. In psychological terms, they had terrorized thousands of people by threats and atrocities forcing them to flee their homes out of sheer terror.

44. In sociological terms, the aggressor forces were systematically destroying organizations and institutions of Muslim, Croatian and other non-Serb communities and persecuting, in particular, their political, religious and intellectual leaders.

45. In cultural terms, the aircraft and artillery of the aggressors were destroying the social, cultural and health structures in an attempt to sever all ties between the local population and the territories under occupation.

46. In economic terms, the Serbian and Montenegrin forces had stripped non-Serbs of their homes, farms and industries. Those and other brutal tactics were the elements of what had come to be known as ethnic cleansing.

47. Although his delegation appreciated the international community's condemnation of ethnic cleansing, it noted with great regret that ethnic

(Mr. Sacirbey, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

cleansing had intensified and the only result had been a considerable increase in the number of displaced persons. That refugee crisis had jeopardized the economic well-being and political security of neighbouring countries such as Croatia which had accepted more refugees than all other countries combined and yet, had been criticized, quite unfairly, at the international level, for not doing enough.

48. Although his Government appreciated the assistance provided by UNPROFOR, UNHCR, the international community and some non-governmental organizations to relieve the suffering of many people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, those noble efforts unfortunately represented only a fraction of what was needed; worse yet, most of the aid did not reach its destination because it was deliberately blocked by Serbian and Montenegrin nationalist forces.

49. The international community must therefore take much more vigorous action. In order to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid, one step that could be taken was the opening of the airport in the city of Tuzla - situated in a region currently under government control - since that airport had a greater capacity than Butmir airport in Sarajevo. Despite numerous requests to that effect, so far nothing had been done. Bosnia and Herzegovina also requested that the land corridors that had been promised should be established and protected and that Security Council resolution 770 (1992) should be implemented immediately.

50. Urgent and vigorous steps must also be taken to alleviate the situation of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the winter.

51. So far, responses to the tragedy had had minimal effect, and the aid sent had been insufficient. Mediation, negotiation and Serbian commitments to undisturbed delivery of humanitarian aid had, more often than not, served as a smokescreen for further Serbian aggression, translating into more suffering for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. A perverted racist dimension was present in that extremely tragic situation.

52. Mr. NIETO (Argentina) said that Argentina attached high priority to the work of the United Nations on the question of refugees and believed that although the High Commissioner was fully implementing her mandate, the new direction taken by the world after the end of the cold war and the accompanying problems imposed an increasingly heavy burden on UNHCR. Greater cooperation was therefore needed from all United Nations bodies and a renewed interpretation of their mandates. The Committee should focus on concerted and sustained action by bodies of the United Nations system, along with a strengthening of the security conditions of international staff. To that end, he drew attention to draft resolutions A/SPC/47/L.7 and L.8 submitted for the consideration of the Special Political Committee under the item: "Comprehensive review of the whole question of peace-keeping operations in all their aspects".

(Mr. Nieto, Argentina)

53. The spread of conflicts involving ethnic and religious animosities and the mass suffering of displaced peoples offered a discouraging future outlook. At the international level, it was necessary to accord priority to the work of prevention and the search for solutions and, at the same time, to tackle the causes of the crises which led to movements of refugees and displaced persons. A broad system of information-gathering and analysis provided the basis for a possible early-warning system which could provide valuable services to UNHCR. The preventive strategies described by the High Commissioner in her introductory statement should also be noted. Argentina agreed that one form of prevention was achieved through presence, and that undertaking involved the entire United Nations system.

54. The strictly humanitarian role of UNHCR should prevail in all circumstances and it was the duty of everyone concerned to provide it with the necessary support to carry out its commendable task.

55. Mr. NOBILO (Croatia) said that the problem of refugees was a pressing burden which weighed heavily upon the world community; by all indications, it would increase in magnitude. Although it afflicted all parts of the world, a situation which Croatia deeply regretted, the territory of the former Yugoslavia was one of the worst affected, and one where the consequences could be most devastating in all respects, since more than 3 million people had been displaced and there had been massive destruction.

56. The Republic of Croatia commended the work carried out by UNHCR and by the various bodies, departments and organizations of the United Nations; it believed, however, that those organizations, in conjunction with other world bodies, needed to focus even more on addressing promptly the problems of refugees created by war and other man-made tragedies.

57. The recent introduction of democracy in Eastern and Central Europe had not brought the peace that was hoped for and instead, certain regimes, motivated by ideas of nationalism, territorial expansionism and racial and religious intolerance, had caused the greatest bloodshed and destruction in the region since the Second World War. The despicable policies and practices of the regime of Serbia and Montenegro went under the name of "ethnic cleansing", and that policy had created the greatest refugee crisis in Europe in the last half of the century and seriously threatened the peace and security of the region. Croatia agreed with the statement of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, appearing in the note by the Secretary-General entitled "The situation of human rights in the territory of the former Yugoslavia" (A/47/635) that "ethnic cleansing does not appear to be the consequence of the war, but rather its goal", because of the brutal atrocities that were being perpetrated, not only against people but also against property and the economic, social and cultural infrastructure.

58. As a result of that atrocious policy, there had been a tide of refugees, and Croatia, in addition to providing care within its territory for

(Mr. Nobilo, Croatia)

265,000 displaced persons, mainly from the United Nations protected areas, had had to accept 500,000 Muslims and Croats who had fled from Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was clear that a country like Croatia with 4,700,000 inhabitants, could not bear the burden of over 750,000 refugees and displaced persons indefinitely.

59. The cost of maintaining those refugees was approximately $100 million a month, an expense which Croatia was meeting on its own, without direct financial assistance from the world community, even though 37 per cent of its industrial capacity had been destroyed by the war, which had also inflicted an estimated $20 billion in war damage.

60. Most of the refugees had been accommodated by Croatian families, who received no financial assistance for that purpose, but many of those families were now succumbing to unemployment and hard economic conditions and could not continue to take care of the refugees. The situation was therefore becoming desperate.

61. Croatia was very grateful for all the international assistance that it had received in kind, in the form of food, medicine and clothing, but it now called on the international community to provide the necessary financial assistance to house and feed the 70,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular during the winter.

62. In order to alleviate the situation in Croatia, financial assistance was required, and in addition the refugee burden needed to be shared by other countries which were in a position to accept them in their own territories. Moreover, refugee camps could be built in safe areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community could ensure their safety. The Government of Croatia was willing to provide logistic and humanitarian support to establish such centres as soon as possible. The return home of displaced persons who were currently in the United Nations protected areas would greatly alleviate the problem.

63. The international humanitarian assistance provided to refugees was valuable, but responded to the symptoms of the problem rather than the root causes. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, the cause of the refugee problem was the policy of "ethnic cleansing", which the world community should eliminate by mobilizing all its resources, including implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

64. His delegation hoped that coordinated international action would be able to relieve the tragic situation of millions of refugees in the former Yugoslavia and the rest of the world.

65. Mrs. LICHALE (Mozambique) said that the increasing number of refugees in various parts of the world was endangering the process of political and democratic change in many developing countries and constituted a threat to

(Mrs. Lichale, Mozambique)

international peace and security. The High Commissioner's devotion to the cause of refugees was therefore commendable.

66. In Africa, the situation of refugees and displaced persons was particularly critical and the persistence of adverse political, economic and environmental factors was making it worse.

67. Mozambique was seriously affected by the problem of refugees. A war which had lasted for 16 years and destroyed a large part of the country's economic and social infrastructure, along with devastating floods, cyclones and one of the worst droughts ever recorded, had left over 1.5 million refugees, who were living in neighbouring countries, and 4 million displaced persons.

68. Despite all those difficulties, the people of Mozambique had faith in the historic process occurring in their country and placed their hopes in the General Peace Agreement (S/24635) signed at Rome and, particularly, in the entry into force of the cease-fire. The new situation of peace would create the necessary conditions for the repatriation of refugees and the return of displaced persons to their homes.

69. The Government of Mozambique was prepared to do everything necessary to facilitate resettlement. The situation was so serious, however, that without outside help the Government would not be able to carry out the difficult task of housing and resettling the refugees in devastated areas where there were no longer any schools, hospitals or basic infrastructure. Mozambique therefore called on the international community to provide material, financial and technical assistance to the programmes of relief and rehabilitation for the refugees and displaced persons.

70. In accordance with the General Peace Agreement, an international donors' conference to finance the electoral process, emergency programmes and reintegration programmes for the displaced persons, refugees and demobilized soldiers in Mozambique would be held in Rome on 15 and 16 December 1992. Mozambique hoped that the international community would once again provide generous support, which had already saved millions of lives in its territory.

71. Mozambique was deeply grateful to the entire United Nations system and to neighbouring countries which, despite their own difficult economic situation, had made sacrifices and welcomed their brothers and sisters from Mozambique.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.